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Ranks of the 'Born-Again' Faithful Continue to Grow

Nearly 4 in 10 Americans can be classified as "evangelicals" or claim to have had a born-again experience. In the first measurement taken in the 1990s, 38% of those interviewed say that they consider themselves to be evangelicals or to have had a born-again experience.

Trend—Evangelicals

1990	38%
1988	33
1978	35

Born-again Christians are most likely to be encountered in the South, where half of the adult population (51%) describe their beliefs as evangelical in nature. Above-average concentrations of the born-again are also noted among blacks (52%), people who did not graduate from college (44%), and those with annual incomes of under $30,000 (43%).

Protestants (50%) are about three times as likely as Catholics (17%) to describe themselves as evangelicals.

The question is asked as follows:

Would you describe yourself as a "born-again" or evangelical Christian?

The results are based on telephone interviews by The Gallup Poll with a randomly-selected national sample of 1,236 adults, 18 and older, conducted June 15-17, 1990.

Profile: Born-Again Christians

NATIONAL	**38%**
Gender	
Male	36
Female	41
Education	
College graduates	27
Attended college	40
High school grads	39
Non-high school grads	48
Race	
White	37
Black	52
Age	
18-29	36
30-49	38
50 and older	40
Region	
East	29
Midwest	38
South	51
West	32
Income	
$50,000 & over	26
$30,000-$49,999	36
$20,000-$29,999	43
Under $20,000	44
Preference	
Protestant	50
Catholic	17

New Yorkers Nix Cardinal's Censure

NEW YORK—John Cardinal O'Connor made headlines this past summer when he threatened Catholic elected officials with possible excommunication if they supported the right of women to obtain an abortion. His message was widely interpreted as being targeted in particular towards Governor Mario Cuomo of New York.

In a city-wide poll taken by WCBS-TV and The New York Times in June 1990 among 1,047 adults, the Cardinal's threat received overwhelming disapproval. Only 16% of New York's residents answered positively when asked, "Cardinal O'Connor has threatened Catholic elected officials with possible excommunication if they support abortion rights. Do you approve or disapprove of this action by Cardinal O'Connor?" Disapproving were 73% of the respondents, and 11% were undecided.

New York's Catholics (20%) were only slightly more likely than Protestants (16%) to say they approved of the Cardinal's actions on the matter. Among the city's considerable Jewish population, only 1% said they approved, while 91% disapproved.

Many Believe Influence of Religion In America is Declining

The influence of religion in America is a factor that has varied widely in surveys taken by Gallup over the years. In the first measurement taken in the 1990s, one person in three (33%) believes the influence of religion is increasing, but nearly half (48%) say its influence is declining. An additional 7% of the populace volunteers the opinion that the amount of influence has remained constant, and 12% hold no opinion on the matter.

Previously, the low point in the proportion of people who thought religion's influence was increasing occurred in the 1960s when an average of only 27% held that view. Just a decade earlier in the 1950s, 69% of the populace believe religion's influence was increasing in America.

Trend—Influence of Religion is Increasing

1990	33%
1980s	41
1970s	34
1960s	27
1950s	69

When the results are viewed demographically, remarkably little variation is noted among various segments of the population. Born-again Christians are the most optimistic about religion's current role in America, with 39% believing it is increasing its influence.

The question is asked as follows:

At the present time do you think religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life or losing its influence?

The results are based on telephone interviews by The Gallup Poll with a randomly-selected national sample of 1,235 adults, 18 and older, conducted June 15-17, 1990.

Influence of Religion in America

	Increasing	Decreasing	About same	Don't know
NATIONAL	**33%**	**48%**	**7%**	**12%**
Gender				
Male	30	48	10	12
Female	37	48	5	10
Education				
College graduates	33	44	11	12
Attended college	34	49	7	10
High school grads.	34	52	5	9
Non-high school grads.	32	44	8	16
Race				
White	31	50	7	12
Black	36	41	12	11
Age				
18-29	35	52	7	6
30-49	37	48	6	9
50 and older	28	47	10	15
Region				
East	29	53	6	12
Midwest	31	52	7	10
South	36	43	9	12
West	36	44	8	12
Income				
$50,000 & over	29	49	9	13
$30,000-$49,999	34	53	6	7
$20,000-$29,999	34	50	8	8
Under $20,000	37	46	6	11
Preference				
Protestant	33	48	7	12
Catholic	32	52	10	7
Born-Again	39	44	7	10

Teens Would Like to Learn About World's Religions

Three teenagers in 10 (30%) say they would have a great deal of interest in learning about different religions in the world. An additional 32% say they would have some interest, but 37% show little or no interest in any study of comparative religions.

The highest level of interest is found among non-white teens, with almost half (45%) expressing a great deal of interest in studying other people's religions. By comparison, just 25% of white teens express similar interest.

Little difference in those having great interest is noted between Protestant (29%) or Catholic (27%) youth, but among those who attended religious services the previous week, 37% show a great deal of interest in studying other faiths.

Knowledge and age contribute to an interest in learning about other religions of the world. Students who are doing above-average work in school (32%) are somewhat more likely than those whose academic achievement record is average or below average to show a great deal of interest. Only 26% of those who are 13 to 15 would like to learn more about the world's religions, but interest rises to 35% of those who are 16 or older.

Classes on the world's religions probably would draw most students in the South (39%) and West (36%). Fewer students expressing a great deal of interest are found in the East (26%) or Midwest (19%).

Interest was measured through the following question:

How much interest do you have in the following—a great deal of interest, some interest, little interest, or none at all . . . learning about different religions in the world?

The findings are based on telephone interviews by The Gallup Youth Survey with a representative national cross section of 500 teenagers, 13 through 17, conducted between March 24 and April 4, 1990.

Interest in Learning About Different Religions in the World

	Great deal	Some	Little	None
National	30%	32%	23%	14%
Male	23	34	26	16
Female	37	30	20	12
Ages 13 to 15	26	34	25	14
Ages 16 to 17	35	29	21	14
Above-average students	32	33	24	10
Average and below	27	31	23	18
White-collar family	27	33	24	14
Blue-collar family	31	32	24	13
White	25	33	25	17
Non-white	45	30	18	7
East	26	31	24	18
Midwest	19	38	28	14
South	39	29	18	13
West	36	30	24	10
Protestant	29	32	26	12
Catholic	27	31	22	18
Attended church last week	37	33	18	12
Did not attend	23	30	29	17

NOTE: "No opinion" (1%, nationally) omitted.

Many Received Religious Training During Childhood

Most Americans (85%) say they received at least some religious training during their childhood. The latest incident figures from Gallup compare favorably with the level of 83% who reported religious training in a survey taken in 1978, but represent a drop in comparison to Gallup Poll results for 1965 and 1952.

Trend—Religious Training

1990	85%
1978	83
1965	91
1952	94

The affluent and well-educated are the most likely people to report religious training, with reports peaking among college graduates (92%) and people with annual household incomes in excess of $50,000 (92%). Least often receiving religious instruction during their childhoods are those who did not graduate from high school (74%) and people with family incomes of less than $20,000 (80%).

Regionally speaking, residents of the Midwest (90%) are the most likely to have received religious instruction, while westerners are the least likely to have attended Sunday school or to have obtained religious instruction in any other way (74%).

Although women generally are more apt than men to be active in church affairs and to be influenced by religion, their adult religious behavior apparently has little to do with their childhood preparation, as they are only slightly more likely than men to have received religious instruction, by a margin of 87% to 83%.

Catholics (90%) are slightly more likely than Protestants (85%) to have received formal religious instruction during their childhood.

Received Religious Training During Childhood

	Yes	No
NATIONAL	85%	15%
Gender		
Male	83	17
Female	87	13
Education		
College graduates	92	8
Attended college	90	10
High school grads.	85	15
Non-high school grads.	74	26
Race		
White	86	14
Black	83	17
Age		
18-29	84	16
30-49	88	12
50 and older	83	17
Region		
East	86	14
Midwest	90	10
South	84	16
West	81	19
Income		
$50,000 & over	92	8
$30,000-$49,999	85	15
$20,000-$29,999	88	12
Under $20,000	80	20
Preference		
Protestant	85	15
Catholic	90	10
Born-Again	86	14

Belief in an Afterlife is Unchanged

Belief that there is existence after life is fundamental to religious belief, and in the view of many social scientists is a primary driving force in people's quest for religious faith and metaphysical speculation, whether their beliefs are primitive or advanced. Currently, seven Americans in 10 (71%) believe in life after death. One person in 10 (10%) expresses uncertainty about life after death, but 19% assert there is no continued existence.

The current level of belief in a life hereafter is unchanged since 1981 when Gallup last questioned Americans on the subject and also found 71% believing their persona would continue in some form after death. The high mark in belief occurred in 1952 when 77% expressed confidence they would have a life after death.

Trend—Life After Death

1990	71%
1980s	69
1970s	70
1960s	74
1950s	74
1940s	72

Interestingly, belief in a life hereafter peaks in middle age among those who are 30 to 49 years of age, when 74% believe in a continued existence. Among those who are 50 or older, and nearer to the time when the question will no longer be academic, there is a slight diminution in belief in the hereafter, while the proportion who are uncertain about the matter rises to 15%. Among those who are age 30, 69% believe in a life after death, but the number who are skeptics (25%) is the highest according to any of the demographical or behavioral variables by which the survey responses were analyzed.

Most confident in life after death are Born-again Christians (84%). Protestants and Catholics are equal in this respect, with 74% of the members of both denominations expressing belief.

Belief was determined through the following question:

Do you believe in life after death?

The results are based on telephone interviews by The Gallup Poll with a randomly selected national sample of 1,236 adults, 18 and older, conducted June 15-17, 1990.

Belief in Life After Death

	Yes	No	Not sure
NATIONAL	**71%**	**19%**	**10%**
Gender			
Male	67	23	10
Female	75	15	10
Education			
College graduates	70	22	8
Attended college	75	17	8
High school grads.	72	17	11
Non-high school grads.	66	22	12
Race			
White	71	19	10
Black	62	32	6
Age			
18-29	69	25	6
30-49	74	17	9
50 and older	68	17	15
Region			
East	66	25	9
Midwest	78	11	11
South	73	18	9
West	67	23	10
Income			
$50,000 & over	72	20	8
$30,000-$49,999	65	25	10
$20,000-$29,999	76	13	11
Under $20,000	70	19	11
Preference			
Protestant	74	16	10
Catholic	74	18	8
Born-Again	84	9	7

Announcing . . . Gallup/CRA Research Services

The Gallup Organization of Princeton, N.J. and the CRA Research Group of Orlando, Florida have created a joint venture to provide research and consultation services to the religious community. The new group combines Gallup's experience of over 50 years in conducting research on religion with the communications consulting capabilities of the CRA Research Group.

The organization is designed specifically to conduct high quality research services at the local and regional level by working with clergy and laity, as well as with the leadership of religious organizations.

Gallup/CRA is a full-service firm offering survey research, focus groups, and data retrieval facilities for all phases of research from designs through analysis and report. The firm will also specialize in consultation on developing and implementing communication strategies for religious organizations.

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